6/27/72

Dear Harold,

This morning, after mailing my latest letters to you, I received your letters to my of 6/25 and 6/26(the lengthy response to my memo re phone conversations). Again, I make immediate response.

Your six-page letter addresses what I reported Sylvia as having said, as well as the general issue of Wecht's access. My response now is in reference to details of what Sylvia said not in my memo but which may further your understanding (still in confidence), plus instances where I am not in agreement with you. I write this both to help along my own thinking and to make a record.

As Sylvia tells it, she was skeptical of Garrison when he announced that he's "solved" the assass. But she was impressed by the fact that he was going around saying that Oswald killed no one. As soon as he came out with the charge that Shaw conspired to kill JFK with Oswald, she knew "where he was at" and she'd have nothing to do with him and the irresponsible things he was doing. She says that Garrison did to Shaw what the authorities did to Oswald, only this was worse because he was alive: "Garrison took this poor man and ruined his life, and for what? Just because he is a fag."

I am not in complete agreement with you that Wecht is not qualified to see this stuff if he needs a backgrounding. For that matter, you and I are not qualified to see it until we have established expertise in forensic pathology. The point is that nobody around has all the ideal qualifications to view these materials. However reprehensible his lack of knowledge about the case is, Cyril has the technical competence to evaluate this stuff, and as you say in your letter, he is competent to read them in the small context of his expertise: "He can read them or he can't. They are independent of anything honestly intended." Still, I think there are certain details he should be alerted to; you may question the need for even this, but I do not, even though I am confident nothing substantial could come from his exam.

You say that the absence of X-rays of the extremeties "is my copyrighted work." I cannot see your interpretation clearly, because their absense is a matter of public record and was made so by the panel which both reported their absence and the autopsy report statement that the whole body was X-rayed. Your work on this is your interpretation of it, at least to my thinking. I do not dispute that you were the first to point out that the panel said this. I do not see this as I see, let's say, the neck fragments. The panel says they exist. Now, I would not consider it proper for you to claim a copyright to the existence of the fragments--their existence was in the NYT, for however dishonest the NYT Times coverage was. However, you did point out and copyright the fact that sworn testimony says no fragments were in the neck, plus the further interpretation. To this you have a right. If the panel had disclosed the presence of fragments and then quoted Humes as saying there were no fragments, then I would question your right. I have little doubt you dispute my interpretation, so let me know your reasoning.

Later on in your letter, you again address this general point: "You are right, as a generality, in the point about the legitimacy of the materials. You tell me one source other than my painful, costly and very time-consuming work over a long period of years that can in any way address this? Including your one example, addressed above." There is more than the one example I chose to cite, and it is other than your work. If you recall, when we first met, I pointed out something which I had noticed in my examination of the records, and which you freely admitted having missed: that is, Humes swore that pix were taken of the inside of the chest, and the panel lists no such pictures. Also, in addition to the absence of X-rays of extremeties, I think, after going over the panel report, that the upper neck may not be covered in the available X-rays. If you mention that in your work, anywhere, I do not recall it.

I was somewhat off the point in speaking of the legitimacy of this evidence.

To be more precise, I mean the integrity of this evidence. The evidence can be incomplete and still be legitimate, but an incomplete record certainly is not an untainted one, and the fact that the pix I mentioned are missing, for example, means that there is no way to confirm or deny the testimony about the damage to the interior neck and upper lung. Here the X-rays are not enough, and the integrity of the evidence is greatly affected because these pix are missing. What the available evidence reveals is necesarily tainted if only because it is incomplete. This also bears on the legitimacy of the evidence, but at this point, I think the integrity of this evidence is more at question than its legitimacy.

Continuing, on p. 2 you quote me as having quoted you as having told me "to do whatever I could in the hopes of lessening the damages Wecht could do." If you refer to my memo where I wrote that, (p. 2, 3rd graph) you will see that I was not quoting you, but rather myself. I said that I felt I should do this for that reason, and then I quote you as saying you would not decide for me. This is not a major point, for it is quite clear in my mind that you would never say such a thing, but I don't want you to develop the misconception that I had ever quoted you that way.

At various points you seem exasperated that I apparently (according to my memo) did not respond to Sylvia's more blatant distortions. Where I felt there was a purpose served, I did, and in fact, in both the cases you cite, I did respond to what Sylvia had said. But first let me say as a general rule that in my relations with both you and Sylvia, I have come across matters which I have found it absolutely futile to discuss, and have decided, sometimes in retrospect a wrong decision, as with Sylvia, that nothing would be served by my arguing these certain points with you or her over and over again. They are few with you, and as I recollect them now, really none involve factual, substantive issues. But take our differences on your writing style. You can rationalize it, but you have never changed my feeling on it; although it is sometimes beautiful and infinitely expressive, I find it often unclear, abusive and counter-productive. That is simply my opinion, even if I am not alone in it. Likewise, I have not suceeded in changing your mind, and I am convinced that there is no way I could change your mind. So I think there is no point in my arguing it with you. Like when I read the epilogue to PM on my last visit. Factually, it was brilliant, except for perhaps some things I would have preferred approached differently (Mrs. JFK test, e.g.) I gave you a positive appraisal of it, and honestly so, but that did not mean I approved of the writing style. I didn't, but I felt, after much experience, that there was no point in my raising that objection.

Back to the memo, you say "Wecht's 'opportunity to let the truth out'. Come on, even for Sylvia this should have been too much for you to swallow without the kind of comment you do not indicate making." I don't know exactly what "kind of comment" you had in mind, but at this point I did tell her, very explicitly, as I wrote in my memo, "there was really nothing Cyril's exam could accomplish in terms of adding new facts or establishing truth." And more. Perhaps this did not contain the force you would have employed in countering Sylvia. I chose to restrain my passion, but not my facts. Also, I did say in the preceding graph in the memo that I was not recordinng our conversation on a "blow by blow" basis, for it was too complex to do that. This means that on the basis of the memo you cannot actually know in every case where I countered Sylvia's arguments. Where my memory was specific, I recorded it.

I would not say in your exact words that "nobody really believes the WR." I would say that nobody who is informed and who is free of the bias that whatever the gov't says must be right believes the WR.

Your criticism that I am "below Alice-In-Wonderland approaches" when I talk about Wecht clearing whatever he says with me are well taken, and obviously true. The more I think about what I have written and said about that, the more I see these

are conditions off of Cloud 9. They are beyond unrealistic, as even my father bluntly pointed out to me.

Sylvia said she mentioned the people from CTIA because Cyril had suggested them to her, she made it clear they were not her own idea, and she'd prefer not to have them in on this.

My position is currently in limbo, because Wecht has yet to call me, and among other thing, it is at least quite presumptuous that he hasn't. My misgivings have not left me, and despite the points you raise in your letter, I still feel an obligation to help. You have helped me knock down any illusions I might have had about how much I can help (and I never thought I could do much to change Cyril or his deficiencies--remember I always said help "as best I can").

If this letter is terse, it is because I wrote it under pressure of other things to do. I am not in any way objecting to your letter or what you said. I am still generally sympathetic to your position. My position seems all the more difficult to me, and I am still thinking it over despite what I told Sylvia, that I would speak to Wecht.

Must run--best,

Howard

P.S. This just came to me--When I spoke of alerting Wecht to the neck fragments, I had my own work in mind, not yours in PM. As you know, I obtained two similar descriptions of the neck fragments from Russell Morgan. These are ireconcilable with the description of the fragments provided by Lattimer. I felt this was something Wecht should have in mind when he viewed the neck X-rays.